



Jordan Walker Leads Call for More Black Youth in Baseball

The Valley's News Observer

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Watts' Own Tyrese Packs Burton Chace Park for Marina del Rey Summer Concert Series

Department of Homeland Security Demands California Secretary of State Shirley N. Weber Scrub Voter Rolls

"It can be slow and painful. Yes, our counts, but we believe every vote counts and want to make sure every vote is counted appropriately, which means verifying signatures," Newsom told CBM. "We have a process that's well defined. I want to improve that process, and we want to continue working with the legislature to fast-track the process."

Judge Orders USDA to Restore \$127 Million in Grants for Black Farmers

The Increasing Land, Capital, and Market Access Program originally provided \$300 million for 50 projects aimed at improving access to land, funding, and markets for farmers of color. The latest court order restores grants for the 24 organizations involved in the legal challenge.

Former Texas A&M Football Player Arrested After His Toddler Son Accidentally Shot Himself

Former Texas A&M running back Le'Veon Moss was arrested after his 2-year-old son accidentally shot himself with a loaded firearm at their Baton Rouge apartment. Police charged him with child cruelty, saying the gun was left unsecured within the child's reach.



He earned Second-Team All-SEC honors in 2024 but faced setbacks from injuries, including a torn ACL and MCL. After going undrafted in the 2026 NFL Draft, Moss signed with the Miami Dolphins as an undrafted free agent before retiring four days later.

Fed Court to Decide Landmark First Amendment Case

By Atlanta Daily World
Black Press USA Wire
On July 22, 2026 three federal judges in the 11th Circuit Court of Appeals in Atlanta – Chief Judge William Pryor, Judge Jill Pryor and Judge Andrew Brasher – heard oral arguments in the appeal of the 2024 unconstitutional conspiracy conviction of the Uhuru 3.

A Tampa jury had acquitted 84-year-old veteran African liberation fighter Chairman Omali Yeshitela and two white reparations organizers Penny Hess and Jesse Nevel of serving as secret agents of Russia, but contradictorily convicted them on the secondary false charge of conspiracy to be secret agents of Russia – all because they had expressed opinions opposing the U.S. support for Ukraine along with advocating for reparations to African people and charging the U.S. with genocide in its treatment of Black people.

This precedent-setting anti-colonial free speech fightback has won international and national support from First Amendment defenders and social justice activists from across the political spectrum, including the National Lawyers Guild, the Civil Liberties Defense Center, the National Conference of Black Lawyers, the Center for Political Innovation, the U.S. Peace Council, U.S. Hands Off Cuba Committee, former NYC Councilman Charles Barron, Dr. Cornel West, Jimmy Dore, Max Blumenthal, Dr. Gerald Horne and Tucker Carlson.

During the 2024 trial, the Uhuru 3’s legal team convinced the jury that the opinions expressed by Yeshitela were his own and not directed by the Russian government by showing print and video evidence of Yeshitela’s activism spanning decades.

Chairman Omali’s published writings, showing a consistent worldview of African Internationalism and anti-colonialism, can be read in 58 years of The Burning Spear newspaper, freely available in the University of Florida’s digital newspaper collection.

In the past five decades he has traveled to seventeen countries to speak to audiences, including in 2019 as the winning presenter at the Oxford Union’s “Africa Debate”. He has been interviewed and featured on platforms such as CNN, Democracy Now, Al Mayadeen, Press TV and countless national and international radio stations, podcasts and newspapers.

The DOJ had argued that the Uhuru 3 are engaged in spreading disinformation “even if the information is true but it makes the government look bad.”

In their earlier Motion to Dismiss, attorneys for the Uhuru 3 argued, “The government here is using a federal criminal statute to prosecute members of an activist group for political speech and activism in opposition to U.S. foreign policy. In so doing, this prosecution strikes at the heart of the First Amendment.”
“This is the first case in which the government

has used the statute that criminalizes unregistered foreign agents (18 USC §951) to target political or dissenting speech. In short, if this case is allowed to go forward, it will reverse more than eight decades of Supreme Court precedent that prohibits the government from targeting dissenting political speech and dissent.”

The appeal of the Uhuru 3’s false conviction on the lesser charge of conspiracy was filed a year ago on June 16, 2025. It argues three points, that:

The lower court’s finding that lawful political speech loses its First Amendment protections when the speaker is alleged to be a Russian agent, should be reversed.

The government presented insufficient evidence of a conspiracy as it presented no evidence, as conceded by the government’s own case agents, that the APSP defendants 1) acted or agreed to act under the direction or control of Ioniv or the AGMR, or 2) knew of the registration requirement, essential elements of a conspiracy.

The jury was misled to believe that it could convict the defendants on the conspiracy charge despite the absence of evidence as to the underlying crime.

More than 80 Uhuru 3 supporters packed the Atlanta courtroom again on July 22, spilling into an overflow room where attendees watched the proceedings on closed circuit TV.

Notable figures attending the hearing included Attorney Mawuli Davis, National Co-Chair of the National Coalition of Black Lawyers; Belinda Parker Brown of Louisiana United International; Efia Nwangaza, veteran of the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) and Malcolm X Center for Self-Determination; John McCarthy of the Center for Political Innovation; Mark Friedman of the U.S. Hands Off Cuba Committee and Paulette Dauteuil of the Jericho Movement and Leonard Peltier Ad Hoc Defense Committee.

Not a “content neutral” prosecution
The oral argument hearing took less than thirty minutes. Uhuru 3 Attorney Leonard Goodman began: “This is a novel case. It’s the first time that Section 951 has been used to directly target speech. The indictment does not allege that any of these defendants conspired to commit espionage or destroy property. Rather the indictment charges a conspiracy to disseminate pro-Russian political speech, which is described in the indictment as Russian “propaganda and disinformation”.

Chief Judge Pryor interjected, “This indictment seems to be necessarily to implicate speech, but the real question is whether the offense, that is, the failure to register for acting as an agent of a foreign government, is content neutral? It seems to me that it is. It may be that the speech activities on behalf of that foreign state would be evidence that you are an agent that hasn’t registered.

He went on to ask, “imagine for me a hypothetical where the individual was acting as



an agent on behalf of the state of Israel and was advocating the attack on Iran, which the United States government was involved in as well and was supportive of the United States activities as well. It seems to me that would be an offense under this statute in that situation just as much as in this situation.”

Attorney Goodman tried to expose the fallacy of “content neutrality” by citing the think tanks in Washington D.C. that receive millions of dollars from U.S. allies who are not indicted as unregistered foreign agents, but he was cut off by the judges.

Some court observers were concerned that the judges’ comments appeared to favor the prosecution. But speaking to reporters as the Uhuru 3 and supporters emerged from the Atlanta Federal Courthouse, Chairman Omali said, “The court recognized there are some issues that need resolution. Attorney Leonard Goodman did an extraordinary job. The prosecution did not have a reasonable explanation about why we were facing conspiracy charges when the jury had found us not guilty on the foundational charge.”

He went on to say, “Nobody in this country has a connection to the struggle for free speech more than Black people. When the Bill of Rights was adopted in 1791, African people were property. We had no rights. There was no assumption it was for us. This is what I’m hoping that, particularly white people, would come to understand. When they came for us around free speech issues that we never had, it’s not us they’re coming for, they’re coming for you. They’re coming for everyone.”

Chairman Yeshitela’s lawyer, Attorney Ade Griffin declared, “We’re here today to change the law for generations to come. And that’s an extremely hard thing to do.”

At the Debrief
Uhuru 3 supporters then walked to the nearby Georgia State University College of Law for a debrief discussion forum and lunch co-sponsored by the Black Law Students Association and the Davis Bozeman Johnson Law group.

Attorney Leonard Goodman shared his reflections on the hearing. “When federal

prosecutors want to prosecute some poor old lady for a drug conspiracy because her son was selling drugs in the house and she was ignoring the signs, they ask for what’s called an ‘ostrich instruction’ which is you can’t put your head in the sand and not see what’s going on around you.

“Well, it should have been applied to the judges as well because it was a little shocking to hear them suggest that we are going to find that this was a content-neutral prosecution. ‘We weren’t going after these people because they are pro-Russia and it just so happens that we raided their home three months after Russia invaded Ukraine and Omali started giving speeches saying we shouldn’t be fueling this war by sending bombs to Ukraine. It’s just a coincidence.”

“President Trump took how many millions from Miriam Adelson, a dual citizen, who was born in Israel and a direct quid pro quo. And I say this as an American Jew, bar mitzvah’d in Chicago. If the decision goes against us, we’ll be filing a petition for rehearing and if that’s denied we will go to the Supreme Court.”

Angela Reaney agreed, “If we lose today, it just means that we have an opportunity to make a bigger impact in the Supreme Court.”

Attorney Mutaqee Akbar, legal counsel for Uhuru 3 member Jesse Nevel, is the son of legendary African psychologist Na’im Akbar. He agreed that, “It’s clear that you all were targeted because of what you were saying. But the same doesn’t apply when people advocate on behalf of Israel. Think about AIPAC. They don’t say the same thing when people advocate for other European nations that go along with what the United States says, that go along with colonialism. It’s only when you speak against what this government says you shouldn’t speak against. The fact that it’s not right just means we need to keep fighting. The struggle continues.”

Chairman Omali discussed the vanguard role of the African anti-colonial struggle in keeping democratic space open for everyone. “It was not the struggle against facism that destroyed McCarthyism or kept society open. It was the struggle of Black people against colonialism that kept the society open.”

Some supporters who attended the court hearing expressed frustration and asked why the judges were allowed to interrupt and take up the time that was supposed to be allotted to the defense lawyers.

Attorney Goodman replied, “They have the power. We don’t.”

Chairman Yeshitela added, “Yet.”

More info at www.handsoffuhuru.org
The post Fed court to decide landmark First Amendment case appeared first on Chicago Defender.

Based on reporting by Chicago Defender.

Medicaid Ban on Routine Care at Planned Parenthood Expires

By Jennifer Porter Gore
Word In Black/Black Press USA Wire
Health care providers such as Planned Parenthood and similar clinics are once again eligible to receive Medicaid reimbursements, allowing low-income patients to resume receiving routine care at those facilities in states that permit the payments.

In Missouri and other states that prohibit

Medicaid reimbursements to Planned Parenthood, however, the federal change has little practical effect. State law continues to bar the organization from receiving Medicaid payments for any services.

Last year, congressional Republicans fell short of their longstanding goal to ban abortion services nationwide while advancing the One Big Beautiful Bill budget legislation.

But they did succeed in banning Medicaid reimbursements to Planned Parenthood and similar reproductive health care providers nationwide for one year. Because Congress did not renew the ban before taking its Independence Day recess, the ban has automatically expired.

Medicaid can once again cover non-abortion services such as cancer screenings, birth control distribution and testing for sexually transmitted infections at the clinics that were able to remain open. But individual states must decide to allow the clinics to be reimbursed.

Millions left high and dry
According to a 2025 KFF tracking poll, 1 in 3 women reported receiving care at a Planned Parenthood clinic, along with one in 10 men. Nearly half of Black women reported receiving care at a Planned Parenthood clinic. More than 4 in 10 Medicaid recipients said they had received services at Planned Parenthood, while one-third of those patients had private insurance. One in 5 Republican women and 4 in 10 Democratic women also said they had received care at a Planned Parenthood clinic.

A spending bill passed in the 1970s already blocks federal Medicaid dollars from paying for abortion in nearly all cases.

During debate over the One Big Beautiful Bill Act, Republicans sought to make the Medicaid funding restrictions permanent. Democrats unsuccessfully tried to remove the restrictions altogether.

In 2025, however, the Supreme Court ruled that states may prevent providers from being paid through Medicaid programs. The court also found that Medicaid enrollees cannot challenge those restrictions in federal court.

Laurie Sobel, associate director for women’s health policy at KFF, said the ruling marked



A one-year federal ban on Medicaid reimbursements to Planned Parenthood and similar reproductive health providers has expired, restoring coverage for routine, non-abortion services in states that allow it. Missouri is not one of them. Envato photo — Envato photo

a significant departure from longstanding interpretations of Medicaid’s “free choice of provider” provision, which guarantees enrollees the right to obtain care from any qualified, willing Medicaid provider.

Nora Walsh-DeVries, vice president of political and legislative affairs at Planned Parenthood Action Fund, said the impact of the cuts “is really horrible for us and some of it is unfortunately irreversible.”

Managing a smaller budget is even more challenging, Walsh-DeVries said, coupled with “kind of also knowing that there is an intention from Republicans to permanently defund us.”

Medicaid covers roughly 96 million Americans, and just over 21.4% of adult Medicaid beneficiaries ages 19 to 64 are Black.

The Trump spending cuts have forced the closure of at least 14 hospitals across 13 states. More than 400 hospitals are at risk of closing or cutting staff, and roughly 360 clinics have closed.

The Medicaid program also covers roughly 40% of pregnancies and births nationwide.

The one-year reimbursement ban forced

Planned Parenthood to close nearly 30 health centers since July 2025. Two out of three of the closed centers were in rural areas, medically underserved communities or places facing shortages of primary care professionals.

All of the closed centers were in counties identified as “contraceptive deserts.”

Some states provided roughly \$400 million in emergency funding during the ban. But Planned Parenthood health centers in states that only partially replaced lost federal funding — or provided no funding at all — were more likely to close than those in states that fully replaced the money from Washington.

States have the final word

Several states — many in the Bible Belt or with large rural populations — have either permanently blocked or sought to block Medicaid reimbursements to Planned Parenthood, according to Sobel’s analysis. They include Alabama, Arizona, Arkansas, Florida, Iowa, Kansas, Louisiana, Mississippi, Missouri, Nebraska, Oklahoma, South Carolina and Texas.

Now that the federal ban has expired, additional states could seek permanent restrictions on Medicaid reimbursements to Planned Parenthood.

Marjorie Dannenfelser, president of the nonprofit Susan B. Anthony Pro-Life America, and other anti-abortion groups want Congress to include the ban in the 2027 tax and spending bill.

“Defunding Big Abortion is now the default expectation of the pro-life movement,” Dannenfelser said in a statement. “When they return to D.C., Republicans must do all they can through reconciliation to once again block taxpayer dollars from Planned Parenthood and abortion businesses.”

Last year’s budget cuts are expected to reduce Medicaid spending by nearly \$1 trillion. Experts say the cuts will cause roughly 10 million Americans to lose their health coverage.

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By Post Staff
Oakland Post

Congressman John Garamendi (CA-08) joined 85 House Democrats this week calling on the Department of Education to immediately abandon its plan to transfer the Office of Special Education and Rehabilitative Services (OSERS) to the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) and the Office for Civil Rights (OCR) to the Department of Justice (DOJ).

In their letter, the members argued that the Trump Administration’s plan to dismantle OCR and OSERS through Interagency Agreements (IAAs) is unlawful because Congress established both offices and only Congress has the authority to eliminate them or alter their responsibilities.

“The law is clear: Congress created OCR and OSERS and Congress alone can eliminate them. The use of Interagency Agreements to accomplish your ‘final mission’ – to eliminate the Department in all but name – is counter to the will of Congress and rests on questionable legal ground. Even Congressional Republicans have expressed reservations and attempted to keep money appropriated to the Department within the Department, rather than being outsourced through IAAs...” the members of Congress wrote.

The members also warned that transferring OCR and OSERS functions would weaken

services for students, families, and individuals with disabilities because DOJ and HHS are ill-equipped to carry out the offices’ core functions.

“The movement of OCR and OSERS also disrespects the very people who rely on those services. Specifically, these moves effectively segregate special education from the rest of the education system, moving it to an agency that has indicated it intends to treat disabilities as a health issue to be remedied, against the wishes of groups that advocate on behalf of disabled children and their families. Such action is particularly concerning given the inaccurate and harmful comments from the HHS Secretary regarding children diagnosed with autism.

“Comments such as these will leave those relying on special education services fearful about whether their rights will be upheld and their needs met. Regarding OCR, given the sensitive nature of many of the cases it handles, victims may be hesitant to seek support knowing the investigation will be run by the nation’s primary law enforcement agency. Such delays may cause cases of discrimination to fester and worsen while sending the wrong message to vulnerable communities,” concluded the members.

In February, the Government Accountability Office (GAO) reported that the Department of Education paid OCR investigators up to \$38 million not to work.

In April, the Senate HELP Committee released a report that in 2025, OCR reached zero resolution agreements involving sexual harassment, sexual violence, seclusion or restraint, racial harassment, or discriminatory school discipline — despite more than 2,700 pending cases.



Rep. John Garamendi. Courtesy photo.

Apollo HTX: Showcases the City's Undiscovered Talent

By Laura Onyeneho
Black Press USA Wire

For decades, one of the Houston area's largest predominantly Black communities has drawn little attention from local arts coverage.

This summer, the Anderson Center for the Arts set out to change that, launching Apollo HTX, a live talent showcase modeled after the Apollo Theater's legendary Amateur Night in Harlem.

The inaugural event brought open auditions, a live competition, and cash prizes to a part of Houston that Michelle Bonton, founder and executive director of the Anderson Center for the Arts, says has long lacked cultural infrastructure.

"Being able to have a show like the Apollo, and to have the Anderson Center for the Arts in this particular community, is very, very huge," Bonton said.

Bonton grew up watching Amateur Night at the Apollo and said the idea for a Houston version had been years in the making. The original, launched in 1934, helped introduce the world to Ella Fitzgerald, James Brown, Luther Vandross, and Lauryn Hill. Bonton wanted that same spirit of discovery rooted in East Harris County, where she has lived and worked most of her adult life.

View this post on Instagram
"A lot of my firsts happened right here in this community," she said. "So it's home for me, and I always think about how I can give back."

The Anderson Center for the Arts is a 501(c)



Michelle Bonton, founder and executive director of the Anderson Center for the Arts (Center), stands with the winners of the first Apollo HTX competition, Troy Mason (Left) and Logan Gilbert (Right). Credit: Jimmie Aggison/Defender — Credit: Jimmie Aggison/Defender

(3) nonprofit whose mission is to expand arts access in underserved communities and preserve Black history and culture. Bonton previously led the organization when it operated as the Harris County Cultural Arts Council, incorporated in 2018 as the first arts organization based in East Harris County.

Choosing East Harris County over established arts corridors like Third Ward or Midtown was intentional. The center wanted something distinctly Houston while honoring the Harlem original, reflected in the name.

"Houston's got talent. How do we showcase that in a way that aligns with our mission, that pays homage and gives respect to the actual Apollo in New York, but that is also very much Houston? And that's where the [Apollo] HTX comes in."

Houston's nonprofit arts and culture sector generates more than \$1.3 billion in annual economic activity and supports more than 21,000 jobs, according to the most recent Arts & Economic Prosperity study by Americans for the Arts & Economic Prosperity study. Spending, Bonton said, has rarely reached this stretch of unincorporated Harris County.

"Houston's got talent," Bonton said. "How do we showcase that in a way that aligns with our mission, that pays homage and gives respect to the actual Apollo in New York, but that is also very much Houston? And that's where the [Apollo] HTX comes in."

Michelle Bonton is a well-known Houston-based educator, philanthropist, and arts entrepreneur.

She is one of the planners of Apollo HTX. Credit: Jimmie Aggison

Apollo HTX held three open audition rounds with no entry fee, a deliberate choice to remove cost as a barrier for performers. A selection panel narrowed the field before finalists competed live in adult and youth categories. The Anderson Center partnered with LoKatt Management to bring the concept to life. Winners received cash prizes: \$1,500 for the adult category and \$500 for the youth category, intended to introduce young performers to the business side of their craft.

Houston singer Troy Mason, who works at FedEx, performs at weddings and other events on the side, won the adult competition singing Sam Cooke's A Change Is Gonna Come. He said the



Logan Gilbert is a student at Rhodes School for the Performing Arts. He comes from a family of church singers. — Jimmie Aggison/Defender

decision to compete came after his wife pushed him to stop sitting on his talent.

"I was overwhelmed, really, to tell you the truth," Mason said of the moment he was announced as the winner. "So many people came out [whom] I invited, they were cheering for me."

Mason began singing at the age of four, performing in front of neighbors and family, which carried a different weight than past shows. He described a backstage atmosphere of camaraderie among competitors, including impromptu Soul Train lines before they went on.

"The response that I got when I was singing, from the first note, was amazing," Mason said. "Everybody was screaming and standing up." Since winning, Mason said he has booked new studio sessions and an upcoming performance with author Pharrell Phelps.

Logan Gilbert is a student at Rhodes School for the Performing Arts. He comes from a family of church singers. Credit: Jimmie Aggison/Defender

In the youth category, seventh-grader Logan Gilbert, a student at Rhodes School for the Performing Arts, won for singing Beyoncé's "Listen."

"ELA, reading, choir, and theater, they really helped me to enunciate and pronounce my words better," he said. "My favorite thing about it is that I get to go up on stage and showcase my talents to the whole entire world."

Growing up in a supportive church family and a family of singers also helped nurture his talent. His biggest career goal is to one day perform on Broadway.



Michelle Bonton is a well-known Houston-based educator, philanthropist, and arts entrepreneur. She is one of the planners of Apollo HTX. — Jimmie Aggison

"It kind of felt like I was performing at my church," Gilbert said. "Because all of my church family was here, my missionaries, my grandma, everybody."

Apollo HTX will return in 2027 as an annual event, with plans to expand the VIP experience. The Anderson Center also plans to build an affordable on-site recording studio as it works to become, as Bonton called it, "the home for Black creative practice" in Houston.

Based on reporting by Houston Defender.

Jordan Walker Leads Call for More Black Youth in Baseball

By Alvin A. Reid
The St. Louis American/Black Press USA Wire

Shortly after Jordan Walker's 12th and clinching blast of the Home Run Derby final against hometown hero Kyle Schwarber had landed among bitter fans at Citizens Bank Park in Philadelphia, the St. Louis Cardinals right fielder spoke of the importance of his achievement.

"I hope it means a lot to [Black kids]," Walker told reporters. "I want to be a role model for the Black kids, and I want more Black kids in baseball. Hopefully this raises some awareness. I know a lot of them are playing basketball [and] football."

"I want them to know the baseball route is open to them, too. There are a lot of kids that are athletic enough and mentally strong enough — Black kids that can play this game — and I want to see them do it."

As for Walker, he has become a rarity — a Black star in baseball. They have been few and far between at Busch Stadium since the days of Bob Gibson, Curt Flood and Lou Brock.

Walker, who grew up in suburban Atlanta, said Braves third baseman "Chipper" Jones was his favorite player until Jason Heyward made his debut with the team.

"For Black kids, I want to kind of be a role model for them," Walker said, "like [Heyward] was for me."

The 2026 All-Star Game rosters featured several Black players, who shared their hopes on inspiring more Black participation in baseball.

"I think once kids see more people to look up to, the more kids will get back into baseball," said Washington Nationals outfielder James Wood.

Modest gains
New York Yankees right fielder Aaron Judge



CJ Abrams and James Wood, Washington Nationals teammates and National League All-Stars, join Jordan Walker in pushing for more Black participation in baseball. Photo courtesy of NBC San Diego — Photo courtesy of NBC San Diego.

and Minnesota Twins center fielder Byron Buxton missed the game because of injuries, but were voted in as American League All-Star starters. Nationals shortstop CJ Abrams joined teammate Wood on the NL squad. And, of course, there was Walker, who stole the show in the Home Run Derby.

"I feel like there's been like a little surge in getting more Black players in the game," Wood said.

"We've got four [Black players] on our team right now. Last year at one point, we had five."

The Cardinals' opening day roster featured three Black players: outfielder Victor Scott II, shortstop Masyn Winn and Walker. After struggling offensively the first months of the season, Scott was sent down to Triple-A Memphis.

When the St. Louis trio took the field on

opening day, Major League Baseball reported that 6.8% of players on rosters, injured lists and the restricted list were Black.

That was up slightly from 6.2% at the start of the 2025 season. It marked a two-year increase from a 6% rate at the beginning of 2024. It was the largest increase in a season since a 0.7% rise from 2017 to 2018.

MLB Commissioner Robert Manfred, who to his credit has ignored criticism of baseball diversity programs, sees progress and hopes for more.

"[Y]ou have to continue to invest, grind it out, do that grassroots work to attract more people to the game and then nurture them in a way that gets them into this elite pipeline," Manfred said.

Cincinnati Reds pitcher Chase Burns, who was named to the NL All-Star team and just signed a seven-year, \$105 million contract extension, said he is perplexed by the low number of Black baseball participants.

"You don't see a lot of Black athletes in baseball. I don't know why that is," Burns said. "I think it's great for guys like me and [Walker] to strive to get Black athletes into the game of baseball, whether it's talking about it or doing stuff in the community. I think it's great he pointed it out."

As for Walker, he has become a rarity — a Black star in baseball. They have been few and far between at Busch Stadium since the days of Bob Gibson, Curt Flood and Lou Brock.

Hopefully Cardinal Nation will appreciate Walker's stardom, and the team will reward him with a lucrative contract extension soon.

The post Jordan Walker leads call for more Black youth in baseball appeared first on St. Louis American.

Based on reporting by St. Louis American.

How Black WNBA Players Became Collateral Damage in the Caitlin Clark Culture War

By By A.R. Shaw
Black Press USA Newswire

Caitlin Clark is more than a WNBA player; she has become a tool of weaponization against Black women. And now the federal government is involved.

Led by Texas Rep. August Pfluger, 11 Republican lawmakers signed a letter to WNBA Commissioner Cathy Engelbert, threatening to have the Department of Justice investigate the league because fouls against Clark "may be racially motivated."

"As Commissioner, you have an obligation to ensure that every player competes in a safe and professional environment, both on and off the court, free from violence, discrimination, or retaliation. If discrimination or retaliation is occurring and creating a hostile work environment, we support any appropriate investigation by the Department of Justice, the Department of Labor, or the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission. If true, such conduct could constitute violations of federal civil rights laws," the letter stated.

The letter creates a false narrative and is irresponsible and dangerous.

Stephanie Christmas, a former women's basketball player at Georgia Southern University, has remained a WNBA fan since its inaugural season in 1997. Christmas has never seen politicians use their platforms to sway the league's direction.

"If you want only one player to play the game, that's not basketball anymore," Christmas shared. "I don't think that they should be putting any legislation in place. They are making it worse for the players and the WNBA game."

The people who are using Clark as a tool couldn't care less about what occurs in between the lines of a basketball court. Statistically, Clark is a decent shooter and above-average passer, but she lacks offensive efficiency and is a liability on defense. Her most staunch defenders are not basketball enthusiasts; instead, they view Clark as a symbol to further their hatred for Black women.

Every moment of discomfort Clark appears to face on the court becomes an opportunity for her supporters to unleash vile and racist language against the alleged perpetrator. If Clark is fouled hard, engages in trash talk with an opponent, or

receives what she views as an unfair call by a referee, her defenders are incited to unleash their wrath.

During a tightly contested match between Clark's Indiana Fever and Phoenix Mercury in June, the Mercury's Alyssa Thomas and Clark were on the court battling for a loose ball. Thomas' arm briefly pressed against Clark's neck during the scramble, but no foul was called. Following the game, Thomas was issued a flagrant one and suspended for one game by WNBA officials. The play triggered Clark's supporters, and they aimed racial slurs and death threats at Thomas. Thomas responded by calling out WNBA commissioner Engelbert for not protecting athletes in the league.

"We still have yet to hear anything from Cathy. It's no surprise," Thomas shared in a press conference after her suspension. "You can see what's being said on social media. It's unfortunate, but as usual, she remains silent. That's unfortunate when our lives are being threatened."

It was only after Thomas' statement that Engelbert responded to the threats sparked by Clark's supporters.

"The WNBA vehemently condemns any and all forms of hate," Engelbert said in a statement. "The safety and well-being of everyone in our community is always the league's top priority. We are aware of Alyssa Thomas' comments, and what she and her teammates have experienced is completely unacceptable and not representative of the WNBA community."

Weeks later, Chelsea Gray of the Las Vegas Aces faced racial animus following a simple foul call that went against Clark. While driving to the basket, Gray was fouled on the arm by Clark, who collapsed to the ground and held her stomach as if she was in pain. Clark yelled at the referee, claiming that Gray had hit her, but video replay proved that Gray never initiated contact with Clark.

But an otherwise normal basketball play led to Gray enduring racial slurs and harassment. Following the game, Gray reposted a screenshot on Instagram of a man using a racial slur against her, and she wrote, "People act like we make this — up."

The post went viral, and the man, who worked for Hilton Grand Vacations, was fired within days.

Gray responded to the ordeal in a press

conference, revealing that she and other WNBA players have faced ongoing harassment.

"Enough is kind of enough," Gray said. "These messages are not the first time. It's not. There was other stuff, too. I just decided to share that one. This time I got fed up with it, and I just decided to share it. And maybe I don't share the other ones, but I know people will think twice."

Clark never asked to become a symbol for those who aim hatred at Black women, but is she doing enough to distance herself from the position?

She issued a statement after hearing of the harassment Thomas experienced. "The harassment, the hate. None of that is OK," Clark said. "There should never be a question of character, as I've always stood up here and said that, and that's truly what I believe; that's how I was raised. So, none of that is okay, and I don't want anyone to experience that."

It's similar to another statement Clark made in 2025 after Angel Reese faced racial slurs while playing against the Fever in Indianapolis. "There's no place for that in our game, there's no place for that in society," Clark said. "Certainly, we want every person who comes into our arena, whether player or fan, to have a great experience. I appreciate the league doing that. I appreciate that the Fever organization has been at the forefront of that."

A competitive moment between Clark and Reese during the 2023 NCAA Championship game sparked a cultural division that followed both players to the WNBA. Their star power has coincided with the league's recent emergence, but the overall success continues to be marred by the divisiveness initiated by Clark's supporters.

"I would like for to have addressed her fans," Christmas said. "Her fans are making threats, and they're making racist comments. And it's only racial coming from her fans. They don't even really love the game. They just love her and then try to make it about race. At some point, I would like to see her stand against her fans when she sees them attacking some people that are on the court."

Beyond her polarizing fanbase, Clark has also been accused of presenting herself as a victim and throwing tantrums on the court when things don't go her way. During a recent game against the Golden State Valkyries, Clark used her hand to



create distance while driving for a layup against the Valkyries' Kiah Stokes. Clark fell to the ground after the layup and began berating referee Gerda Gatling while yelling, "Give me a f—g call! I got fouled five times!" Replay video revealed that Stokes initiated no contact, and Gatling showed restraint by not giving Clark a technical foul.

The clip of Clark's tantrum went viral, and she faced backlash online for her negative attitude.

"Caitlin Clark is a liar and the most dangerous type of white woman," @mama4obama wrote on X. "One whose lies get Black women death threats. She wasn't even touched and should have been thrown out of the game for the way she behaved toward the ref."

"The Caitlin Clark experience serves as a microcosm of America's divided socio-political atmosphere."

The Caitlin Clark experience serves as a microcosm of America's divided socio-political atmosphere. She has been chosen as a figurehead for hatred and division while her Black colleagues on the court remain prime targets.

It's become an inescapable stain for a league that fought for years to garner interest and respect.

The opinions expressed in this commentary are those of the writer and not necessarily those of the AFRO.

The post How Black WNBA players became collateral damage in the Caitlin Clark culture war appeared first on AFRO American Newspapers.

Based on reporting by Afro-American — Washington.

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**LOS ANGELES
NEWS OBSERVER**
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Features

How Howard University Is Fixing a 500 Student Enrollment Scare

By Tega Egwabor
Black Press USA Wire

Howard University has successfully reenrolled 46 incoming freshmen following a significant enrollment crisis that initially left more than 500 students without a spot at the historically Black university. The situation has raised broader concerns about the school's enrollment management processes and whether adequate resources exist to support students navigating complex financial and administrative requirements.

How the enrollment crisis began

Last Friday, Howard University confirmed it had notified 502 first-time-in-college students that their accounts did not meet the enrollment and financial obligations required by previously communicated deadlines. The announcement sent shockwaves through the incoming student community, prompting an outpouring of emotional reactions across social media, where many students shared videos expressing distress after learning they had been unenrolled from the university.

According to school officials, students had reportedly been informed about enrollment requirements, payment expectations and key deadlines as early as March, through channels that included emails and orientation sessions. Despite that earlier communication, the sudden

enforcement of these policies left many students and their families scrambling to resolve the issue in a short window of time.

Families rush to campus seeking resolution

In response to the unfolding crisis, numerous families traveled to Howard's campus in Washington, D.C., hoping to rectify the situation and secure their students' enrollment ahead of the upcoming fall semester. The urgency behind these visits reflected both the emotional weight and financial stakes tied to attending a university with Howard's long-standing academic legacy.

University acknowledges gaps in its process

Howard University's senior vice president for enrollment management addressed the situation publicly, acknowledging that some students had in fact submitted documentation or made genuine attempts to meet the school's enrollment requirements before the deadline. University officials indicated they are now working through a review process, examining student records and submitted documentation to determine whether reinstatement or reenrollment is appropriate on a case-by-case basis.

The university's leadership also acknowledged that the situation revealed a need for greater investment in enrollment support resources going forward, signaling an openness to reassessing



Photo credit: Shutterstock.com / Amy Lutz — Shutterstock.com / Amy Lutz

how the school communicates and enforces its enrollment policies moving forward.

How can affected students get help?

In light of the ongoing crisis, Howard University is encouraging impacted families to reach out to the appropriate university offices for support. Families with questions about a student's enrollment status have been directed to contact the Enrollment Management Office directly. Separate channels have been established for financial aid inquiries, as well as questions related to pending scholarships or outstanding student account issues, allowing families to route their concerns to the office best equipped to assist them.

A broader reflection on higher education access

The situation at Howard serves as a pointed reminder of the challenges many students continue to face while navigating the financial and administrative complexities of higher education. As the university works through its review process, the events highlight the importance of clear communication and consistent support systems, particularly at historically Black colleges and universities that play an outsized role in educating Black students across the country.

What comes next for Howard

Moving forward, Howard University's administration faces mounting pressure to implement lasting changes that ensure students remain properly informed and supported throughout the enrollment process. How the university addresses these underlying resource and communication gaps is likely to shape both the immediate outcomes for affected students and the institution's broader reputation as it continues serving future generations of students.

This article was originally reported with contributions from The Associated Press and WJLA 7News.

Based on reporting by Rolling Out.

IN MEMORIAM:

Clara Ester, Civil Rights Activist, Dies at 78

By The Carolinian
Black Press USA Wire

NASHVILLE, Tenn. (AP) — Clara Ester, an activist who as a 20-year-old college student rushed to the Rev. Martin Luther King Jr.'s side when he was shot, has died.

Ester, who died on July 9 at the age of 78, was among a few remaining witnesses to King's assassination and its immediate aftermath in Memphis. With the passing of the Rev. Jesse Jackson Sr. in February and Ester this month, King aide and former U.N. ambassador Andrew Young is believed to be the last surviving eyewitness to the shooting.

Ester Grew up in Memphis attending Centenary United Methodist Church, where her pastor was civil rights leader the Rev. James Lawson.

"We used to joke about colored water being Kool-Aid and the white water just being water, and so that satisfied us as children," Ester told The Associated Press in 2018, around the 50th anniversary of King's death. "But until you see the racism, until you see what has been withheld from you because of your color — is what started to really truly anger me. And I knew if there was a movement that could help change any of that, I had to be in it."

Civil rights issues were often discussed from the pulpit of her church, Ester said. Lawson was very involved in the sanitation workers' strike, so it was natural for her to become involved too.



"I got to the point that I didn't miss a mass meeting," she said. "I picketed every day that the picket lines were up."

Even 50 years later, she clearly remembered the impact of hearing King's speech at the Mason

Temple the night before he was assassinated and how it seemed to foreshadow his death the next day.

"He had seen the mountaintop," Ester said. "It was evident on the balcony — how calm."

Ester had gone to the Lorraine Motel for dinner on April 4, 1968, when she saw King chatting on the balcony with people below. Then she heard a shot.

"He was speaking calmly and pleasantly to a crowd," she said. "And so he was happy at that moment. But to lay there with his eyes open, looking toward heaven. He had seen the promised land, and he may not get there with us, but he promised that we as a people will see the promised land."

Ester said she ran to King and saw he was struggling for air. She tried to loosen his belt and asked someone to bring towels to try to staunch the bleeding. After King was taken away by ambulance, she had to stay at the hotel, where she was questioned by police.

When she was finally allowed to go home, her parents asked if she was OK.

"I said, 'No, I'm not OK. There's something wrong with this.' And it was many months later that I guess at some point, I just broke down," Ester said.

She left Memphis to work elsewhere that summer, and as soon as she finished school, she left for good.

"It's just too much to ... it hurt me that it

happened, but it hurt me that it happened in my hometown, that that's the legacy for this city," she said.

Ester moved to Mobile, Alabama, where she found work as a neighborhood organizer at the Dumas Wesley Community Center, a Christian service program supporting children, seniors and people experiencing homelessness, according to her obituary. She later was named the executive director of the center, serving in that role until she retired in 2006.

In 1986, she was commissioned as a deaconess in the United Methodist Church, a type of lay minister . She remained active in the church throughout her life and held leadership roles that included serving as the national vice president of United Methodist Women.

Methodist Bishop David Graves met Ester when he was assigned to the Alabama-West Florida Conference in 2016. He wrote in a remembrance that Ester did not take to him at first, but gradually they came to love each other.

"Thank you, Clara Ester, for a life well lived and for loving me. It changed me," he wrote. "Clara will be missed immensely, but what a day of rejoicing is going on in heaven. For love will always find a way for those who trust in Jesus and seek to love even in our differences."

Based on reporting by The Carolinian.

Saving Black Mothers Starts Outside the Hospital

By Jennifer Porter Gore
Seattle Medium/Black Press USA Wire

For much of the developed world, childbirth has become safer with each passing generation. Medical advances, better prenatal care, and stronger public health systems have dramatically reduced the chances that bringing a child into the world would cost a woman her life.

Unless she's Black American.

That stubborn contradiction framed a Word In Black panel discussion last week, where physicians, researchers, and community health leaders explored why members of the African diaspora still die from pregnancy-related complications at disproportionately high rates—even as maternal mortality falls in developed nations.

Their conclusion was unequivocal: the disparity is not about biology but about lack of access and opportunity—along with unequal systems. The issues that jeopardize Black women's maternal health happen long before she goes into labor.

Moderated by Jennifer Porter Gore, Word In Black's health correspondent, the livestreamed conversation brought together three panelists whose focus is confronting the maternal health crisis using community-based solutions.

'I Knew It Wasn't Biological'

Tamara Mason, director of Maternal and Child Health Collective Impact at the March of Dimes in Atlanta, discussed the policy and public health barriers that continue to drive disparities. Kay Matthews, founder and executive director of the Shades of Blue Project, spoke about the lived experiences of Black mothers' mental health needs while navigating pregnancy, loss, and the postpartum period.

And Dr. Kaytura Felix, host of the Deep Care podcast and a distinguished scholar at the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health, explained why improving outcomes requires expanding the definition of maternal care to include entire communities in which Black families live.

When she decided to investigate the Black maternal health crisis, "I knew it was not genetics. I knew it wasn't biological," said Felix. She began researching the crisis after noticing that Black women in her native Dominica, a small island in the Caribbean, weren't dying in childbirth as often as in the U.S.

That's despite both groups sharing the "same genetic pool," Felix said, noting that the ancestors of Black Dominicans also have endured the transatlantic slave trade.

The difference between the U.S. and Dominica was the system, Felix said.

"I knew that there had to be racism in the [American] medical establishment," she said. "And so, the question I asked myself is, 'What is the Black community doing about the black maternal health crisis?'"

Midwives a 'Game-Changer'

Felix's research uncovered the extensive role of midwives and led to the launch of the Black Birthing Future Study, through which she learned more about a model of care that differed greatly from one she'd seen as a medical doctor. The study is built on interviews with community midwives, doulas, mental health therapists, and their clients.

The solutions are already in the community.



Community solutions to the maternal mortality crisis among Black women was the topic of discussion at the latest Word In Black livestream event last Wednesday. The panel featured (from top left) host and moderator Jennifer Porter Gore, Word In Black's health editor; Dr. Kaytura Felix of the Bloomberg School of Public Health; Tamara Mason, an executive with the Atlanta office of the March of Dimes; and Kay Matthews, founder and executive director of the Shades of Blue Project. — YouTube/Word In Black

Collectively putting aside our egos, how can we do this bigger but address what's happening in our community now? Because we can't wait.

Tamara Mason, March of Dimes, Atlanta

Midwives, she said, treat childbirth as "a community and family event," in which the pregnant woman is "the sun" and all care and support decisions revolve around her needs.

"Client after client after client told us, 'My midwife loves me,'" Felix said. "And that is not just a 'nice-to-have.' That's a game changer" that can drive better outcomes for Black women in the U.S.

'Mental Health is Maternal Health'

Black midwives "are working really hard to make sure that the family is supported," she said. They also connect their clients to doulas, lactation specialists, and neighbors who show up with diapers and food.

Matthews founded the Shades of Blue Project in Houston — and later, Black Maternal Mental Health Week — after her daughter was stillborn. Amid a devastating tragedy, she said, she experienced racism in the healthcare system first-hand.

"My mental health [struggle] is what had me out here saving myself," she said. "That is no way to live."

Yet the trauma she experienced, Matthews said, went unnamed for years: "There was no correlation being made to infant loss and postpartum depression, which I was clearly going through... I did have to save myself with no guidance."

Today, she says, her organization argues that mental health is as important as prenatal care and care during childbirth: "Mental health is a part of maternal health."

Pregnancy and Finances

While it may seem obvious that a pregnant

person's economic condition is important, panelists said there's not enough understanding about how drastically financial stability can affect physical and emotional health.

Mason of the March of Dimes in Atlanta said data from her city illustrate the point.

Atlanta is "the number one income inequality city in the country," she said, adding that the gap between the haves and have-nots is so great that a child born into a low-income family has only a 4% chance of escaping poverty in her lifetime.

"Who is in poverty?" she said. "Black women of reproductive age."

Mason went on: "Pregnant women do not live in a vacuum. If we have a mom that is poor, if we have a mom who is food insecure, who's housing insecure, all of these outcomes are going to impact her pregnancy journey."

Matthews agreed, pointing out that financial insecurity often keeps women from seeking help in the first place — even help that's free. Her organization began offering diapers and wipes at its emotional support groups because so many mothers otherwise couldn't afford to attend.

"I'll never have someone sit across my desk and need diapers, because diapers start right now at about \$25 a case," she said, recalling her own experience being told she "made 73 cents [per hour] too much" to qualify for temporary public assistance.

'Poor People Know What to Do'

To address those root economic pressures, Mason's organization piloted a guaranteed basic income program in two high-poverty Atlanta ZIP codes. The idea, she said, traces back to a quote attributed to Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

"Give them money to start to pull themselves

out of poverty. And poor people know what to do... they're making it happen," Mason quoted King as saying. The program gave 25 pregnant women \$1,000 a month for a year, no strings attached.

"The premise is that we know we're not going to be able to make a change in that indicator in one year," she said. "But if we start there, right, that's the gold standard — high rates of preterm birth — if we start to reduce the stress and strain of these moms, then eventually they will have better birthing outcomes."

Still, the panelists agreed that even where community solutions exist, policies and institutional barriers often stand between pregnant women and the help they need.

For example, Felix said, most insurance still doesn't cover midwifery care, and many states require midwives to practice only under a physician's supervision. When midwives refer patients to hospitals for a higher level of care, as they are trained to do, they are often met with hostility rather than cooperation.

She described one case in which a midwife rushed a client to the hospital due to complications—only for hospital staff to throw shade on the client: "So that's the girl that tried to have the baby at home."

Reforming the System

Felix called for insurance reform, less restrictive licensing laws, and broader physician education about the different types of midwifery care.

"All states should allow midwifery and all paths to midwifery," she said. "Not just nurse midwifery and certified community midwifery, but also traditional midwifery and apprenticeship."

Ultimately, panelists agreed that no single organization can solve the crisis alone and that trying to do so only slows progress. "We should not all be doing 'all the things,'" Matthews said. "We have to start leaning into accountability for the roles that we play."

Mason, who is also a certified doula, echoed the point.

"The solutions are already in the community," she said. "Collectively putting aside our egos, how can we do this bigger but address what's happening in our community now? Because we can't wait."

For Felix, the path forward also means reconnecting with practices Black communities relied on for generations before they could access the modern medical system.

"We need to go back and reclaim some of the ancestral knowledge that we've had," she said, describing midwifery as one way to restore what she called "mothering the mother" — the community support many new parents, including herself, have had to go without.

"I lost my mother four months before I had a baby, and I was a mother," she said. "I did it by myself."

By reviving that collective care, so prevalent in Black communities, it is possible to reverse the crisis: "We can address it in a collective way, and tap into the collectivist mindset that is part of African descended people. We are collectivist and communal, and we are really tapping into those superpowers that we have."

Based on reporting by Seattle Medium.

Political Playback:

California Capitol News You Might Have Missed

By Bo Tefu and Antonio Ray Harvey
California Black Media

“The Power to See Threats Sooner”: Gov. Newsom, Safety Officials, Showcase California’s Investments in Hi-Tech Wildfire Prevention

On July 21, Gov. Gavin Newsom held a presentation in Sacramento, alongside state emergency officials, to showcase California’s major investments in cutting-edge firefighting technology and wildfire prevention.

The media event took place at McClellan Airport in Sacramento County, a primary hub for state aerial firefighting operations. Newsom used the presentation to highlight the state’s modern, tech-driven strategy to combat increasingly severe wildfires.

“California leads with science, innovation, and grit. We are meeting this moment with urgency and building 21st-century solutions for a 21st-century crisis,” Newsom stated. “And through it all, our extraordinary firefighters continue to step up, stand in harm’s way, and protect our communities.”

California Natural Resources Agency Secretary Wade Crowfoot, CAL FIRE Chief Joe Tyler, and California Governor’s Office of Emergency Services Director Caroline Thomas Jacobs appeared with Newsom and provided updates about their respective agencies.

Under the Newsom administration, California’s fire protection budget has nearly doubled since 2019 — from \$2 billion to \$3.8 billion, including more than \$2.5 billion in wildfire resilience and forest health projects.

Newsom detailed the expansion of artificial intelligence (AI) programs, predictive analytics, and sophisticated software used to detect fires at their earliest stages. He also highlighted the launch of FireSat satellites, a dedicated space network designed to dramatically improve early wildfire detection and tracking.

“Every innovation we adopt supports our people on the front lines who work tirelessly to protect our communities when wildfire strikes,” Tyler stated. “Technology and innovation help us do our jobs more quickly and safely; however, we still need all Californians to stay vigilant, support our firefighters, and work together to build a safer, more resilient California.”

In addition, CAL Fire showcased a fleet of more than 100 AI-guided firefighting drones positioned strategically across California to provide real-time mapping and aerial monitoring.

The presentation stated that California operates the nation’s largest state-owned aerial firefighting fleet, including the impending addition of two more



Gov. Gavin Newsom speaks during a July 21 presentation at McClellan Park highlighting California’s investments in advanced firefighting technology and wildfire prevention tools. CBM photo by Antonio Ray Harvey.

C-130 aircraft by the end of the year, alongside a workforce of over 11,000 personnel.

“Technology is transforming how California prepares for wildfire, giving us the power to see threats sooner, position resources before fires start and move mutual aid faster when every second counts,” Thomas Jacobs said. “Governor Newsom’s investments are helping us turn real-time intelligence into action, so firefighters and local communities have the people, equipment and information needed to save lives and keep fires from becoming major disasters.”

Rep. Kamlager Dove Demands Care, Justice for Man Shot by ICE

U.S. Rep. Sydney Kamlager-Dove (D-CA-37) is calling on U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) to provide immediate medical care to a constituent she says has been denied treatment after being shot by ICE officers last year.

Speaking on the House floor, Kamlager-Dove urged ICE to provide urgent care for Carlitos Ricardo Parias, describing him as a father, husband and community volunteer who was recognized by his local city council for his service.

According to Kamlager-Dove, Parias was shot near his elbow by ICE during an encounter in October. She said he received initial treatment at a hospital but has not received proper medical care since being transferred to the Adelanto ICE Processing Center in December.

The congresswoman said she visited Parias in late May and found his condition had worsened. She said his hand had turned purple, his fingers had become atrophied, and he was suffering from headaches and persistent nerve pain.

“I am worried that he may have a bone infection, and that his arm could be amputated,” said Kamlager-Dove during her remarks.

Kamlager-Dove said Parias’ case highlights broader concerns about medical care at the Adelanto detention facility. She noted that a federal judge recently ordered sweeping changes to improve conditions for detainees.

“It is time for ICE to comply with this judge’s orders and end this cruelty at Adelanto and nationwide,” she said.

ICE has not publicly responded to the allegations raised during Kamlager-Dove’s House floor speech. The congresswoman urged the agency to provide Parias with immediate medical treatment while implementing the court-ordered reforms at the Adelanto facility.

California Sen. Padilla Joins Colleagues to Introduce Bill Imposing Term Limits on Supreme Court Justices

U.S. Sen. Alex Padilla (D-Calif.) joined several Senate Democrats in introducing legislation that would establish 18-year active terms for Supreme Court justices and create a regular schedule for appointing new members to the nation’s highest court.

The Supreme Court Biennial Appointments and Term Limits (BATL) Act would require the president to nominate one justice every two years, during the first and third years of each presidential term, with Senate confirmation. Under the proposal, justices would serve 18 years hearing the Supreme Court’s full docket before transitioning to senior status, where they would retain their lifetime appointments but hear only a limited number of constitutionally required cases and serve as substitutes when active justices are unavailable.

Supporters say the legislation is designed to reduce the politicization of Supreme Court appointments and restore public confidence in the judiciary by ensuring predictable vacancies and regular turnover on the Court.

“The Supreme Court has reached unprecedented and unacceptable levels of politicization,” said Padilla. “Term limits are a commonsense solution to lower the temperature on the Judiciary and start restoring trust in the highest court in our land.”

Under the bill, only the nine most recently appointed justices would hear appellate cases, which make up the vast majority of the Court’s workload. Justices serving in senior status would continue to hear original jurisdiction cases and could participate in appellate cases if an active justice is recused or otherwise unavailable.

If approved by Congress, the legislation would not take effect immediately. Instead, it would become effective at the start of the first new presidential term following its enactment.

The bill is sponsored by Padilla, Sens. Sheldon Whitehouse of Rhode Island, Cory Booker of New Jersey and Richard Blumenthal of Connecticut. The legislation is also cosponsored by Sens. Mazie Hirono of Hawaii, Jeff Merkley of Oregon, Peter Welch of Vermont, Brian Schatz of Hawaii, Kirsten Gillibrand of New York, Adam Schiff of California and Patty Murray of Washington State.

The proposal has received endorsements from several advocacy organizations, including the Brennan Center for Justice, Public Citizen, Citizens for Responsibility and Ethics in Washington, the Project on Government Oversight and Stand Up America, which argue the changes would make the Court more accountable and strengthen public confidence in the judiciary.

As America’s Anti-DEI Push Grows, California’s Black Orgs Find Critical Support From Black Freedom Fund

By Solomon O. Smith
California Black Media

Over the last six years, the Black Freedom Fund (BFF) has expanded its reach as a support system for California’s Black-serving organizations, providing a boost to many groups that could be locked out of funding as federal government and corporate diversity spending has dried up.

The BFF, originally founded as a five-year initiative, is now a permanent organization and benefactor to over 150 organizations this year, according to the organization’s website.

Marc Philpart, president and CEO of the BFF told California Black Media (CBM) that the organization exceeded \$100 million in funding within the first two years of its original five-year goal.

Philanthropic partners, community leaders and others saw the need for this type of fund, said Philpart, which led to the permanent establishment of the BFF in 2022.

Philpart was the BFF’s first full-time employee. Currently, the BFF receives about 80% of its funding from philanthropic institutions, according to Philpart, many of which are private or Donor-Advised Funds.

“It’s a wide array of different types of entities in the sector, but the important point is that you know we have support from the majority of foundations in the state,” he said. “And especially those that consider themselves to be focused on racial justice and social justice more broadly — they’re all investors and partners in our work.”

This year, the BFF has invested \$4.6 million in 119 organizations, according to the organization’s website.

“Our investments reflect a deliberate strategy to strengthen the broader ecosystem of Black-serving organizations across communities and regions throughout California during a challenging moment for the field,” the website reads.

In South Los Angeles, one organization, Strategic Concepts in Organizing and Policy Education (SCOPE), has received funding from the BFF this year. SCOPE intends to use the funding to train its members and community to combat the harms of gentrification and improve health outcomes for Black and Brown communities in South Los Angeles, according to the development director for SCOPE, Naomi Boas.

Boas describes SCOPE as a “membership-based organization” which trains its members to work as leaders in the community, observe L.A. city council meetings and organize.

SCOPE also facilitates training to enable members to work with other aligned organizations. Currently the organization is fighting oil drilling and gentrification in Black and Brown communities in Los Angeles.



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The executive director of SCOPE, Marcus McKinney, told CBM via email that funding from organizations like BFF is critical.

“The Black Freedom Fund is helping to shift philanthropy from funding programs to funding power. Black communities have the vision and leadership to solve the challenges they face; yet Black-led organizations and leaders have historically received only a fraction of philanthropic dollars, leaving their efforts chronically under-resourced,” wrote McKinney. “That’s why this kind of funding matters.”

Since 2020, the BFF has supported about 240 separate organizations across the state that have the same goals of BFF—empowerment of Black communities.

This includes a wide range of organizations, including Communities United for Restorative Youth Justice (CURYJ), Covenant House California, the Coalition for Humane Immigration Rights of Los Angeles (CHIRLA), among others.

Although BFF has increased its funding of Black serving groups, Philpart says there is a rigorous process for who gets funding. The main focus is on organizations “centered on Black communities,” he said. Organizations working toward Black empowerment and liberation are encouraged to apply but that is no guarantee of funding. Many of these entities are vetted by a diligent process that ensures that they are in good standing with the state and community.

“We reviewed those applications based on set of criteria related to the strategy that I just described,” said Philpart. “They were scored and assessed, and from there we made determinations.”

Specialized programs like the Black LA Relief and Recovery Fund, an emergency program created to “meet the immediate and long-term needs of Black communities impacted by the devastating Eaton wildfire in Altadena and Pasadena, are also funded by BFF.

Right now, the BFF says it is focused on the state of California, but it has not written off any future opportunities to work with national partners if the opportunity presents itself.

In addition, the BFF has created the Legal

Education Advocacy and Defense for Racial Justice, or LEAD initiative. The initiative seeks to educate local groups on the legal landscape amid Trump’s rollback of civil rights and is already operating in several states.

Since President Donald Trump’s Executive Order 14398, titled “Addressing DEI Discrimination by Federal Contractors,” issued in March this year, Philpart said concerns among philanthropic organizations seeking to support Black communities have intensified.

Philpart acknowledged the current administration’s attacks on civil rights and said that they affect Black communities.

“It has impacted us, but it hasn’t stopped the important work we’re doing,” said Philpart. “These dynamics that we all face in this country are challenges for fundraising for racial justice work in this environment, but they are not the kind of things that prevent us from existing.”

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Features



Williams points at the former Douglass High School campus, where a healthcare clinic and “resilience hub” was planned. (Briah Lumpkins/KFF Health News)



In a community of mostly older residents who rely on public transportation, a healthcare clinic planned for this building would have increased access to care and built trust, local advocates say. (Briah Lumpkins/KFF Health News)

Public Health Improvements Stall Amid Trump’s DEI Crackdown

By Briah Lumpkins
THOMASVILLE, Ga. — As Earl Williams drove through a historic Black neighborhood known as Dewey City in his hometown, he hardly recognized what he saw.
Homes that once belonged to friends, family, and neighbors had siding covered in mold. Some were boarded up. Others had holes in their roofs.
Black churches once used Oquina Creek, which runs along the border of the neighborhood, to baptize their congregants. Today, fecal bacteria and other contaminants have made the water unsafe due to an aging wastewater system.
“Sometimes you get the feeling like you’re in a Third World country,” Williams said. After three decades in Washington, D.C., he returned four years ago with a mission to revitalize communities such as Dewey City, which he said are “part of what makes Thomasville, Thomasville.”
A \$19.8 million Community Change Grant from the Environmental Protection Agency was supposed to shift the tides of the neighborhood Williams grew up in.
The city and the Thomasville Community Development Corp., where Williams formerly served as community development director, applied for the grant in 2024. It was part of a \$2 billion effort initiated under the Biden administration to help disadvantaged communities address environmental health risks and create clean energy and climate resiliency projects.
But three months after winning the grant, Thomasville became one of 80 communities across the country — from Hawai’i to Alabama to Massachusetts — to see the funding stripped as priorities shifted in Donald Trump’s second presidency.
On the first day of his second term, Trump signed an executive order titled “Ending Radical and Wasteful Government DEI Programs and Preferencing.” It stated that the Biden administration “forced illegal and immoral discrimination” through diversity, equity, and inclusion programs. In an emailed statement, EPA spokesperson

Mike Bastasch said the administration is “fully committed to being a great steward of taxpayer dollars.” He added that the “radical agenda” of DEI and environmental justice “preferencing” are not within the agency’s core mission of protecting human health and the environment. Environmental health advocates argue, though, that the decision to cut the grants was not rooted in science. They say that equating environmental justice to DEI is an act of bad faith and that withholding the money forces disenfranchised communities to delay long-overdue updates needed to protect public health for marginalized populations. “I unfortunately believe we’re going to see a reversal in the health profile of this country,” said Jalonne White-Newsome, an associate professor at the University of Michigan who served in the Biden administration as the first federal chief environmental justice officer. “This current federal regime has decided that humanity and public health and justice don’t mean anything,” she said. “Why Us?”
Thomasville, near Georgia’s southwestern border, is home to just over 18,600 people. The city had hoped to improve health outcomes in neighborhoods on its southern and western sides where, according to the grant proposal, “historical redlining created a legacy of disinvestment.” Those areas have a deep history: Dewey City, for example, was the first neighborhood in the city where Blacks could build homes after the Civil War. It’s also home to the closed Douglass High School — the first public school for Blacks in Thomasville, established in 1902. “This place has been neglected,” said Williams, who occasionally hosts historical walks through the community. “But it’s worth bringing it back online.” The proposed “Restoring Resiliency” project featured a plan to remove toxic substances such as mold, lead paint, and asbestos from homes, repair a nearly 82-year-old wastewater system, and convert part of a shuttered high school band room into a health clinic. “This was a long and storied attempt to bend the arc of justice closer,” said Jeremy Rich, a Thomas County commissioner and the pastor at First Missionary Baptist Church.

“Justice in healthcare. Justice in environmental impact.” Having a clinic in the community would be a “game changer,” Rich said. During the covid pandemic, he said, older residents who rely on public transit were reluctant to go to the nearby hospital or the county health department to get vaccinated. When his church offered shots from Black nurses, he said, vaccination rates improved. Many residents don’t have the financial means to remove mold, lead paint, and other toxic materials, said Thomasville Mayor Pro Tem Lucinda Brown. “They just have money to live with every day. That’s it,” she said. “If they can make that happen.” The grant meant hope, and its reversal left many asking, “Why us?” Williams said. In the EPA’s May 2025 letter announcing the grant termination, it said Thomasville’s project promoted “initiatives that conflict with the Agency’s policy of prioritizing merit, fairness, and excellence.” The grant was “inconsistent with, and no longer effectuates, Agency priorities,” the letter said. Environmental justice projects are rooted in science, not DEI, said Jillian Blanchard, the senior vice president of climate change and environmental justice at Lawyers for Good Government, a national nonprofit that provides pro bono legal assistance in focus areas such as health equity, immigration, and environmental health. “Where is the water dirty? Where is the air unclean?” she said. “That is where the money should go.” In June of last year, nearly two dozen communities and organizations around the country filed a class-action lawsuit to get the Community Change Grants reinstated. The lawsuit argued that the projects — such as efforts to create energy-efficient housing in Kalamazoo, Michigan, and empower Houston residents in the pollution permitting process — were vital. The case was dismissed by a federal district judge in 2025 but is being appealed. Thomasville was not named in that lawsuit. But the city did appeal the EPA’s decision on its project with the support of Blanchard’s group. The city and the EPA continue to dispute the issue. This March, the EPA’s deputy inspector general, which serves as an independent watchdog for the agency, released a report concluding that the process

for determining the awardees was fair. Such federal funding is needed because large-scale change is difficult for small municipalities to achieve without getting stuck with high-interest loans, Blanchard said. “It’s next to impossible,” she said. “That’s one of the reasons the things haven’t been done.” It’s Not Over
The city of Thomasville has found other ways to make some improvements in the meantime. With the help of a nearly \$3 million federal Community Development Block Grant from the Department of Housing and Urban Development, it made repairs to portions of Dewey City’s sewer, water, and drainage systems. The Thomasville Community Development Corp. has begun building affordable housing in Dewey City and intends to convert a portion of the closed Douglass school into apartments for seniors. The corporation has also applied for \$764,000 in congressional funds through the office of Sen. Jon Ossoff (D-Ga.) that it hopes to use to construct a community health clinic in Dewey City. Decisions on these funding requests will be made this fall. “It’s not over,” said Williams, whose legacy in Thomasville runs deep. At the center of what locals call The Bottom — a two-block stretch of downtown where independent Black and other minority-owned businesses once thrived — is a plaque honoring his father, Earl Williams Jr., the city’s first Black mayor. As he peered at his father’s memorial on a muggy afternoon, he reaffirmed his intentions. “There’s more work to be done, and I’m able,” he said. “I like pouring into the community.” But he has little hope the initial grant will be restored under the current administration. “That was our shot. We didn’t do anything to miss it,” he said. “We just did it during the wrong period of time.” KFF Health News is a national newsroom that produces in-depth journalism about health issues and is one of the core operating programs at KFF—an independent source of health policy research, polling, and journalism. Learn more about KFF.



Black churches once baptized their congregants in Oquina Creek in Thomasville, Georgia. Today, fecal bacteria and other contaminants make the water unsafe. (Briah Lumpkins/KFF Health News)



Dilapidated houses are common in Dewey City, a historic Black neighborhood in Thomasville. Many residents don’t have the funds to mitigate issues with mold, asbestos, or lead paint. (Briah Lumpkins/KFF Health News)

NAACP Announces \$20m Voter Registration Drive at National Convention in Chicago

By Erick Johnson
Black Press USA Wire
With just over three months before the midterm elections, the NAACP at its 117th annual convention in Chicago announced an unprecedented \$20 million voter registration campaign ahead of the midterm elections.
The announcement kicked off the NAACP’s national convention at McCormick Place where thousands of visitors and delegates participated in workshops and seminars that stressed the organization’s theme of “We the People” and purpose of educating Blacks about their constitutional rights.
Throughout the week-long convention, vendors sold merchandise, media organizations held onsite interviews in “The HUB,” and visitors signed a massive “We the People” mural.
Governor J.B. Pritzker and Mayor Brandon Johnson were among the dignitaries who reinforced the NAACP’s message during the convention’s opening plenary.
Black voting rights have been under attack in the last several months when Louisiana, Tennessee, Alabama and Florida gutted historic Black congressional districts after the U.S. Supreme Court ruled such districts were unconstitutional and were no longer needed in modern times despite protections under the Voting Rights Act of 1965.
The NAACP, the nation’s oldest civil rights organization, is concerned those decisions will roll back political and economic gains Blacks have made

in the last six decades.
NAACP Board Chairman Leon Russell told the opening session that the NAACP would undertake a \$20 million voter registration and mobilization drive “to motivate six million to 10 million voters” who did not cast ballots in the last two elections to do so.
As part of the campaign, the NAACP plans to recruit “tens of thousands of volunteers to join the crusade to turn out millions of us this November.”
The plan will target voters in 14 states and 33 congressional districts, with the full list expected to be disclosed later.
“We must move 60 percent or more of all eligible voters to the polls,” Russell said.
The NAACP has a history of leading voter registration drives in Black neighborhoods across America.
In his speech, Pritzker said, “In Washington and across the country, extremists holding high office are working to erase Black history rather than learn from it, to take away voting rights instead of strengthening them, to divide us rather than unite us,” he said.
He added, “These are not simply disagreements over policy. These are challenges to the very idea that democracy belongs to all of us. Challenges to the very idea that we are all created equal.”
Pritzker said the phrase “We the People” reflects America’s ongoing effort to expand equality, noting that the nation’s founding ideals initially excluded

enslaved people, women and other groups.
Mayor Brandon Johnson said, “For 117 years this incredible organization has helped bend the arc of history towards justice. And not because progress was inevitable, but because ordinary people made the extraordinary decision to organize, advocate and refuse to accept injustice as the reigning form of governance. That work has never been easy, and today it remains as urgent as it has ever been.”
“Across this country we are witnessing wicked efforts to undermine fundamental rights, weaken Democratic institutions, and to turn neighbors against one another.”
“We see attempts to silence the truth and erase our history and convince people that somehow division is stronger than solidarity. But history has taught us something very different. Every time people have been told to accept injustice, they have risen together to reject it.”
During Trump’s second term in office, the NAACP has filed more than 70 lawsuits to stop his grasping and often unconstitutional moves to grab total power.
Pritzker said “Illinois has been at the forefront of the struggle for freedom and equality” ever since Jean Baptiste Point du Sable, a non-white, was the first permanent resident of what is now Chicago, Pritzker noted.
Pritzker also said Illinois also gave the nation the crusading African American journalist Ida B. Wells, and it elected more African American



members of Congress than any other state. He said Illinois gave the nation the late civil rights leader Jesse Jackson and “a young community organizer” who eventually went from Chicago to the White House, Barack Obama.
“But such progress is not inevitable,” the governor warned. “It requires people willing to sacrifice. None of this is by accident. It is because Black America shows up, reminding us of the painful part of our history while giving us hope for the future.”
Based on reporting by Gary Crusader.

Dodgers Roll After All-Star Break



Freddie Freeman had strong outs during the 9-game road trip

By Earl Heath
Contributing Sports Writer

The Los Angeles Dodgers entered the All-Star break on a sour note after being swept by the Arizona Diamondbacks. Since the break, however, the defending National League powerhouse has quickly regained its form.

The Dodgers wrapped up a successful East Coast road trip with a 6-3 record, winning all three series against the New York Mets, Philadelphia Phillies and New York Yankees.

Los Angeles has been one of baseball's best road teams this season, posting a 36-20 (.643) record away from Dodger Stadium while averaging 5.79 runs per game.

Freddie Freeman caught fire during the trip, collecting 11 hits over a four-game span, including three consecutive three-hit games before adding two more hits in the series finale. His 11-hit stretch matches Andy Pages' four-game total from March and April for the most by a Dodger over a four-game span this season. Freeman's hot streak also pushed his batting average back above the .300 mark.

Back home, the Dodgers dropped a 7-6 decision to the Seattle Mariners in the opener of a three-game series despite another spectacular performance from Shohei Ohtani. The two-way

superstar went 3-for-4, launching a 432-foot leadoff home run in the first inning before doubling home the tying run in the ninth. The comeback fell short when Mookie Betts grounded out with runners on second and third to end the game.

Dodgers NotesThe Dodgers could soon receive a major boost to their pitching staff as the trade deadline approaches.Right-hander Tyler Glasnow is progressing well in his recovery and is scheduled to face hitters in a live batting practice session Wednesday at Dodger Stadium. Glasnow and left-hander Blake Snell have both been sidelined since May.Ohtani has not pitched since July 3, leaving Yoshinobu Yamamoto, Justin Wroblewski and Emmet Sheehan to shoulder much of the workload. While the trio has helped keep the Dodgers atop the standings, the club knows it will need a healthier rotation for a deep postseason run.All-Star catcher Will Smith has also resumed baseball activities after being sidelined since early June with a neck injury.The Dodgers also reinstated Kiké Hernández from the injured list while optioning infielder Alex Freeland to the minors. Freeland batted .231 with a .309 on-base percentage, a .313 slugging percentage and a 74 OPS+. Although his defense has been solid, the rookie's offensive struggles limited his role with the big league club.



USC Quarterback Jayden Maiava Nominated for Allstate AFCA Good Works Team

Ohio State Edges Oregon in Big Ten Preseason Poll Ahead of 2026 Season

By Earl Heath
Contributing Sports Writer

The unofficial Big Ten preseason poll was released Monday ahead of the conference's annual media days in Chicago, offering an early look at how voters expect the league race to unfold in 2026.

The top of the conference remains as competitive as ever, with three programs viewed as legitimate national championship contenders. The preseason media rankings, compiled by Cleveland.com, reflect a conference that continues to be one of the strongest in college football.

Ohio State claimed the No. 1 spot in the preseason poll, but only by the narrowest of margins. The Buckeyes received 15 first-place votes, while Oregon earned 11, highlighting just how little separates the conference's top two teams entering the season.

Indiana was ranked third after receiving five first-place votes, further cementing its rise from

surprise contender to national powerhouse. The Hoosiers, along with Ohio State and Michigan, have combined to win the past three national championships, a stretch that has reshaped the balance of power in college football and intensified the race to Indianapolis for the Big Ten Championship Game.

While Ohio State enters the season as the favorite, Oregon's rapid ascent under coach Dan Lanning has positioned the Ducks as a serious championship threat. Indiana's continued success has also expanded the conference's list of title contenders beyond its traditional powers.

The conference features several teams with realistic College Football Playoff aspirations, while coaching changes and roster turnover add intrigue throughout the league. Traditional powers such as Michigan, Penn State and USC remain firmly in the mix, setting the stage for another highly competitive season.

Projected Big Ten Preseason Standings

Rank	Team	(First-Place Votes)
1	Ohio State	(15)
2	Oregon	(11)
3	Indiana	(5)
4	USC	
5	Michigan	
6	Penn State	
7	Washington	
8	Iowa	
9	Illinois	
10	Minnesota	
11	Nebraska	
12	Wisconsin	
13	UCLA	
14	Northwestern	
15	Maryland	
16	Michigan State	
17	Rutgers	
18	Purdue	

Los Angeles Rams Unveil 'Classic Sol' and 'Fearsome White' Alternate Uniforms



By Earl Heath
Contributing Sports Writer

The Los Angeles Rams unveiled two new alternate uniforms Thursday, introducing the "Classic Sol" and "Fearsome White" designs that pay tribute to some of the franchise's most memorable eras.According to the team, the new uniforms celebrate "two defining chapters in franchise history through modern design."The Classic Sol uniform honors the Rams' 1951 NFL Championship and commemorates the 75th anniversary of that title. The design features a yellow-on-white jersey and pants combination. One of its most distinctive elements is a trio of sleeve stripes, while a special Sol monogram neck tag adds a unique touch that reflects the championship-inspired theme.

The Fearsome White uniform features an icy white color scheme and pays tribute to the Rams' legendary "Fearsome Foursome" defensive line that dominated during the 1960s and early 1970s. The iconic group included Lamar Lundy, Rosey Grier, Merlin Olsen and Deacon "Head Slap" Jones.

The alternate uniform incorporates subtle design details, highlighted by ram horn-themed shoulder stripes that mirror the horns featured on the team's classic helmets.

The new look also includes a matching alternate helmet, featuring a white ram horn set against a blue background. The design serves as a modern callback to the Rams' helmets worn during the 1960s.

With the introduction of the Classic Sol and Fearsome White uniforms, the Rams continue to blend the franchise's rich history with contemporary style, giving fans a fresh look while honoring some of the greatest moments and players in team history.

Big Ten Media Days Open With Championship Expectations

By Earl Heath
Contributing Sports Writer

CHICAGO — With the last three College Football Playoff national championships won by Big Ten schools, the conference opened its 2026 Football Media Days this week with plenty of confidence and even higher expectations.

The annual gathering showcased some of the nation's premier players, introduced several new head coaches and reinforced the Big Ten's growing reputation as college football's deepest conference.

Among the biggest storylines entering the season are coaching changes at several marquee programs. New faces include Matt Campbell at Penn State, Kyle Whittingham at Michigan and Pat Fitzgerald at Michigan State.

The league also featured some of its biggest stars, including Ohio State wide receiver Jeremiah Smith and USC quarterback Jayden Maiava, both expected to be among the nation's top players this fall.

USC Eyes College Football PlayoffUSC was represented by head coach Lincoln Riley, quarterback Jayden Maiava and defensive linemen Jide Abasiri and Alex VanSumeren.The Trojans enter the season



USC head coach Lincoln Riley speaks to the media during Big Ten Football Media Days , in Chicago. (Photo by Justin Casterline/Getty)

ranked No. 4 in the Big Ten preseason poll but face one of the nation's toughest schedules, playing each of the three teams ranked ahead of them in conference play.Despite the challenge, Riley believes this year's roster is the strongest of his USC tenure."Our team is more equipped to be a College Football Playoff

team than at any point since I've been here," Riley said.His confidence stems from a roster that includes the nation's No. 1 recruiting class, several freshmen expected to contribute immediately, and a defense expected to take a significant step forward after the addition of longtime TCU head coach Gary Patterson to the coaching staff."The ball has been tougher to move in practice," Riley said, crediting Patterson's defensive influence.Riley also praised Maiava's development entering his third season with the Trojans."Of all the guys I've been fortunate enough to coach, I don't know if I've had anyone improve from day one to this point as much as Jayden," Riley said.Maiava made significant strides between his first and second seasons under Riley, who has built a national reputation for developing elite quarterbacks.New Era Begins at UCLAUCLA introduced first-year head coach Bob Chesney, quarterback Nico Iamaleava, defensive back Cole Martin and linebacker Samuel Omosigbo.Chesney arrives in Westwood after posting a 21-6 record in two seasons at James Madison, leading the Dukes to a College Football Playoff appearance in 2025. He has brought much of that success with him. Ten former James Madison players transferred to

UCLA, joining a transfer class of 42 newcomers and a 20-player 2026 recruiting class.One of the biggest questions entering preseason camp will be how quickly Iamaleava develops under new offensive coordinator and quarterbacks coach Dean Kennedy and how the Bruins build chemistry with an influx of 62 newcomers while establishing Chesney's culture.Martin, an Oklahoma transfer and Pasadena native, returns after starting all 12 games in UCLA's secondary last season. He was one of only three Bruins defensive players to start every game in 2025. Martin helped UCLA limit opponents to 196.6 passing yards per game last season, ranking 34th nationally. That marked a dramatic improvement from 2024, when the Bruins allowed 244.7 passing yards per contest.High Expectations Across the ConferenceWith defending national champion Ohio State leading the preseason rankings, followed by Oregon and Indiana, the Big Ten enters the 2026 season with multiple teams expected to contend for the College Football Playoff.Media Days made one thing clear: after producing the last three national champions, the Big Ten expects to remain at the center of the college football conversation this fall.



Kimbabula Cuban Dance and Music Ensemble showcased at the Afro Mujeres Fest la (Photo Credit: Marion Apio)

Sixth Annual Afro Mujeres Fest Reclaims Heritage, Healing, and Culture in South Central LA

By Marion Apio
Contributing Writer | California Local News Fellow

Amid stage smoke and West African rhythms, the piece explored memory and sacred dreams while honoring maternal ancestors. During the performance, artists paused to address systemic injustice, honoring Black children who have died without receiving justice and calling on the audience to speak their names aloud into the space.

The all-women Afro-Brazilian percussion ensemble Bloco Obini—composed of local educators, nurses, activists, and healers—brought



Kaje Movement Collective artists at the Afro Mujeres Fest la (Photo Credit: Marion Apio)

their drums into the center of the venue. Carrying the spirit of Ayan Agalu, the Yoruba spiritual archetype symbolizing the drum's power to bring strength and unity, their polyrhythmic drumming drew attendees from across the grounds into an expansive dance circle.

Dancers representing Kimbabula Cuban Dance and Music showcased authentic Afro-Cuban traditions through choreography developed by director Kati Hernandez. Clad in vibrant attire, the three dancers performed traditional Cuban Rumba, Orisha sacred movement, Afro-Cuban jazz, and Cuban Son, illustrating the deep ties between dance, music, and Afro-Cuban heritage.

As dozens gathered at a South Los Angeles park on July 25 for the sixth annual Afro Mujeres Fest, the event focused on diaspora unity and ancestral healing. Featuring music, dancing and spoken word poetry, the day-long event at The Plant Chica in Leimert Park spotlighted diversity, strength and connection.

“Today we are honoring the mighty queens of the Afro diaspora,” said Barbara Fant, the event’s co-host and author of “Joy in the Belly of a Riot.” All human life was birthed through women, and all human life started in Africa. Therefore, the African

woman is the original mother of human life.”

The festival coincided with International Afro-Latin American, Afro-Caribbean, and African Diaspora Women’s Day, which was established on July 25, 1992 in the Dominican Republic by Black women from 32 Latin American and Caribbean countries who sought to combat systemic racism and sexism. Recognized by the United Nations, the date serves as an annual international rallying point to center women of African descent across the globe.

The South Los Angeles event was co-organized by local initiative Afro Mujeres, youth arts nonprofit Project Knucklehead, and the Black Alliance for Just Immigration (BAJI).The program opened with a land acknowledgment showing honor and respect to the indigenous Tongva, Gabrielino, and Chumash peoples

The ceremony was immediately followed by a traditional libation offering led by Janet “Djembe” Ogunlande, founder of Rhythm Counts and a practitioner of Traditional Yoruba Isese culture, who invoked ancestral strength to open the space.

For organizers, holding the celebration in South Los Angeles directly reflected the demographic reality of the local Black community, where global migration and local heritage intersect.

Dr. Amir Whitaker, co-founder of Afro Mujeres and Project Knucklehead, emphasized the unique makeup of the region’s population and the intent behind the festival’s mission.

“Today we’re celebrating that Black women are diverse,” Whitaker said. “They can come in all shapes, sizes, and forms, and all come from all corners of the earth.”

Whitaker noted that25% of Black women in Los Angeles are immigrants or come from an immigrant family.

“They come from all over the world, and they have space here,” Whitaker said. Whitaker noted that creating dedicated space in Leimert Park provides a necessary counterweight to the systemic pressures faced by Black women globally across national borders.

“Today’s event means unity and healing,” Whitaker said. “It’s Black women all over the world, and they’re facing discrimination, sexism everywhere. And we bring them here to center them, to honor them, and just lift them up and enjoy these beautiful performances.”

Throughout the afternoon, performances served as both cultural preservation and active social remembrance, featuring artists representing distinct traditions across the African diaspora.

Tula B. Strong, a Liberian American choreographer, California State University,



Dr. Amir Whitaker, Barbara Fant & Dr. Jewel Jackson at Afro Mujeres Fest la (Photo Credit: Marion Apio)



Bloco Obini group performing at the Afro Mujeres Fest la (Photo Credit: Marion Apio)

Fullerton lecturer, and clawhammer banjoist, took the stage to highlight the historic Black legacy within American folk and banjo music.

Integrating movement forms such as Dunham technique, Afro-Cuban Rumba, Jamaican Dancehall, and Hawaiian Hula, Strong taught the audience traditional vocal refrains, leading the crowd in collective song alongside her performance.

The Kaje Movement Collective, founded and directed by Kara Janelle Wade, presented Inauguration, an original multidisciplinary performance adapted from Janelle’s dance film that integrated modern movement and spoken word.

For participating artists, the festival offered an essential haven to reinforce community bonds and celebrate shared lineage.

Performing artist Geminelle Rollins-Malone returned for her second consecutive year, leading the audience in an interactive chorus of her song “I Am Luminous” and speaking to the importance of the space.

“In a world where we have to fight for our

presence, we have to fight to take up space, it’s really beautiful that there’s a space for us to pour into one another,” Rollins-Malone said. “It’s a space to celebrate our Blackness, to celebrate womanhood, creativity, and all that we are as Black women.”

Rollins-Malone offered a direct message of affirmation to Black women in attendance and across the broader diaspora.

“You are more than enough,” Rollins-Malone said. “You are so luminous, and I’m so proud of who you are, and I hope that you’re proud of who you are too.”

The afternoon concluded with poetry readings by Cincinnati-born multidisciplinary artist Teresa “Poetress” Robinson, founder of Liberated Productions and author of From Seed to Spirit, followed by a closing poem delivered by Fant, leaving community members with a shared reaffirmation of resilience, identity, and diaspora unity.

Asm. McKinnor’s Bill Banning Drones Above Outdoor Entertainment Events Awaits Senate Decision

By Antonio Ray Harvey
California Black Media
Assemblymember Tina McKinnor (D-Inglewood) is advancing legislation that would prohibit unauthorized drones from operating within



Assemblymember Tina McKinnor (D-Inglewood), right, introduced Assembly Bill 2113 to address a public safety enforcement gap involving unauthorized personal drones flying over crowds at large outdoor events in California. A violation would be an infraction punishable by a fine of up to \$500. McKinnor is shown with fellow California Legislative Black Caucus member Assemblymember Isaac Bryan (D-Ladera Heights). CBM photo by Antonio Ray Harvey.

400 feet of large outdoor ticketed entertainment events.

Assembly Bill 2113, titled “Aviation: Unmanned Aircraft Systems: Ticketed Entertainment Events,” passed the Senate Public Safety Committee on June 30 by a 6-0 vote and was referred to the Senate Appropriations Committee.

The Assembly approved the bill May 18 on a bipartisan 72-0 vote, with support from 54 Democrats and 18 Republicans. AB 2113 must clear the Senate Appropriations Committee before the Legislature’s Aug. 31 deadline to remain active.

“Large, ticketed entertainment events such as concerts, festivals, and sporting events bring thousands of people into dense confined

spaces, including many venues in my (California State Assembly District 61),” McKinnor said. “Unauthorized drones and activities in these settings pose a real risk to public safety and can interfere with event operations and emergency response.”

McKinnor said the legislation would establish a state-level restriction that local authorities could enforce while preserving the federal government’s authority over U.S. airspace.

McKinnor also said, “While the Federal Government regulates airspace, local law enforcement is responsible for protecting public safety on the ground, yet current law does not provide a clear state-level prohibition addressing this issue. AB 2113 creates a straightforward prohibition on operating unauthorized drones within 400 feet of or directly above a large outdoor ticketed entertainment venue.”

Under the bill, the restriction would apply to outdoor professional music, sporting or performing arts events held at venues with capacities of at least 1,000 people. The venues must have gated entrances or other barriers restricting public access, and admission must require a ticket or similar license issued by the venue operator.

Each violation would be an infraction punishable by a \$500 fine.

McKinnor, who chairs the Assembly Select Committee on the 2028 Olympic and Paralympic Games and the Los Angeles County Legislative Delegation, said the restrictions are particularly important as California prepares to host major international gatherings, including the 2028 Olympic and Paralympic Games.

McKinnor also cited major live entertainment festivals, including the Coachella Valley Music and Arts Festival, BottleRock Napa Valley, La Onda, the Stagecoach Festival, Beyond Wonderland SoCal and the Aftershock Festival. Together, those events attract hundreds of thousands of attendees annually.

“AB 2113 protects the intellectual property rights of artists and addresses a growing public safety gap at public events due to the growing use of drones across California,” said McKinnor, a member of the California Legislative Black Caucus (CLBC).

Live Nation Entertainment, which is sponsoring the bill, supports the proposed restrictions. The

company promotes concerts, operates venues, provides ticketing services through Ticketmaster and manages artists.

Josh Stevens, senior manager of government affairs for Live Nation, described AB 2113 as “a necessary and significant improvement on public safety regulations.”

“Last year alone, we welcomed millions of fans to Live Nation events across thousands of concerts,” Stevens said. “Modern technology such as drones and other unmanned aerial vehicles present a new challenge for public safety at large events, and this bill would be a meaningful step to solving that challenge.”

However, the Association for Uncrewed Vehicle Systems International (AUVSI) has raised concerns about the bill’s potential effects on legitimate commercial drone operations.

Mason Sisk, the group’s director of government affairs, said AB 2113 would address the “disruptive use of drones,” including operations that infringe on artists’ intellectual property. However, the trade association has asked McKinnor’s office to add an exemption for commercial flights providing services such as cargo transportation and infrastructure inspections.

AUVSI describes itself as the world’s largest trade association dedicated to advancing uncrewed systems and robotics. Its members include drone manufacturers and operators, public safety agencies and higher education institutions.

Sisk said AUVSI has “been having very good discussions and operating in good faith” with McKinnor’s office as it seeks language distinguishing legitimate commercial flights from drones that loiter, hover or disrupt events.

“Our issue with the bill really has to do with the distinction between the ‘loitering and hovering’ and the disruptive use of drones. So, I would ask that the committee not support the bill until we have language figured out,” Sisk told the Senate Committee on Public Safety. “I think we’re close. We’ve been working together in the last few weeks. I’m optimistic that we’ll get some language together that will suit both our needs.”

The Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) has authority over the safety, use and efficiency of U.S. airspace for traditional aircraft and drones. Federal



AB 2113, a drone bill introduced by Assemblymember Tina McKinnor (D-Inglewood) exempts emergency responders and law enforcement agencies from restrictions on operating unmanned aerial vehicles, such as these used by Cal Fire. The bill aims to protect public safety by clearing the skies for authorized emergency operations. CBM photo by Antonio Ray Harvey.

restrictions already prohibit drone operations near certain large stadiums during specified events.

California law also makes it a misdemeanor to operate a drone near an active emergency scene when doing so impedes, disrupts or prevents law enforcement officers, firefighters, emergency medical personnel or military personnel from performing their duties.

To address concerns raised during the legislative process, McKinnor accepted amendments narrowing the bill’s scope and exempting certain authorized operations. The prohibition would not apply to venue-approved flights, venue employees conducting official business, regulated utility employees performing official duties or emergency personnel responding to an incident.

“My office and the sponsor have been engaging with stakeholders throughout this process, and I want to thank everyone for their patience and collaboration,” McKinnor said. “We remain committed to working in good faith as the bill moves forward to address concerns of stakeholders.”